

Local

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New bike lane on Commerce to feature green sections



Edward A. Omelas, San Antonio Express-News

A vehicle drives on the bike lane Saturday Nov. 9, 2014 at the intersection of West Commerce Street and S.W. 24th Street.

By Drew Joseph

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SAN ANTONIO — Portions of a new bike lane on West Commerce Street will look a bit more colorful than the standard white lines on pavement: They will be filled in with green paint.

The bike lane, a new 1.6-mile route that runs on Commerce from San Joaquin Avenue to 19th Street, will be painted green at major intersections, including at Gen. McMullen Drive and 24th and 29th streets. The goal is to alert both cyclists and drivers to the presence of each other and to traffic coming from other directions.

“By coloring it green, it helps to inform the driver that it's a separated space,” said District 5 Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales, who represents that stretch of Commerce Street and is an avid cyclist.

The bike lane is part of a \$315,000 Commerce Street project that also includes improvements to the road, according to the city's transportation and capital improvements division. The project started in mid-October and is mostly finished, with the green paint work expected to be done this week.

The plan is for future bike lanes to be colored green at some of what are known as conflict zones — areas such as intersections where cars and bikes cross each other. If funding allows, crews will also go into existing lanes and paint certain conflict zones in them green, according to city officials.

Robin Stallings, executive director of advocacy group BikeTexas, said San Antonio is ahead of many other cities in highlighting the conflict zones in green. Austin started doing so several years ago.

He said that in addition to serving as a warning to drivers, the coloring helps remind cyclists that they are at an intersection where cars will be crossing their path.

“It's a really valuable step,” Stallings said. “Those green sections help focus everybody.”

The separation of the bike lane along West Commerce will hopefully reduce the number of crashes involving bicycles, Gonzales said. She said

she expected the lane to be mostly used for transit, as recreational cyclists tend to stick to trails.



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Green paint slated for major intersections of the new West Commerce Street bike lane is part of a larger road project.

“We know that adding more bike lanes makes people feel safer, and will hopefully encourage more people to use that,” she said.

The installation of the Commerce bike lane arrives as the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization is working on a study examining bicycle and pedestrian conditions in the San Antonio region. The study will build upon San Antonio's 2011 bike plan and will look at Boerne, Seguin and New Braunfels, in addition to how pedestrians and cyclists use the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

The study, which is expected to be finished in the spring or summer, aims to come up with recommendations to improve the cycling and pedestrian networks in each area.

The study includes an online survey available through Nov. 21 asking people how often they bike or walk places, for what reasons and what could encourage them to do so more. The survey can be found at **www.alamoareampo.org**.

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Vehicles pass the bike lane Saturday Nov. 9, 2014 at the intersection of West Commerce Street and SW 24th Street.

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